MORVEN FARM, OUTBUILDINGS
Off of Route 20
Simeon vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1378-A

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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**MORVEN FARM, OUTBUILDINGS**

**HABS No. VA-1378-A**

Location: Morven Farm is located off of Route 20, near Simeon, in Albemarle County, Virginia.

Morven is located on Carter's Mountain in southeast Albemarle County in Virginia. The farm shares the mountain with James Monroe's Ash Lawn - Highland and is also near Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. The house and surrounding buildings are 680' above sea level, 200' higher in elevation than the Albemarle County courthouse in Charlottesville.

Present Owner: The 2,836-acre farm was donated to the University of Virginia by John Kluge.

Significance: The estate includes a main house, a claims house, a kitchen, a smokehouse, a cobbler's house and a caretaker's cottage. It also includes numerous barns, other outbuildings, and gardens. The main house, kitchen, smokehouse, and cobbler's house constitute a preserved nineteenth-century farm complex. The grouping of service buildings around the main house shows the hierarchical arrangement of farms of this era. The claim's house, also part of this grouping, is probably the oldest building on the site and was built around 1796.

Historical Data: The Morven estate was part of a 9,350-acre parcel patented in 1730 by John Carter, son of Robert "King" Carter. This tract included the Carter's Mountain section of Albemarle County. In 1796, a Carter relative sold part of the property, called Indian Camp, to William Short of Philadelphia. Short had served in George Washington's staff during the American Revolutionary War. He later was Jefferson's secretary and held several other foreign diplomatic offices.

Soon after purchasing the property, Short built the structure now known as the claim's house or settler's cottage. In 1926, Charles Stone bought Morven and established a well-known thoroughbred stud farm. When John Kluge bought the estate in the 1980s, its $8.5 million dollar selling price was the highest in Albemarle County history.

In the gardens surrounding the nineteenth-century buildings are pieces by

Auguste Rodin, Henry Moore, and other noted sculptors.[1]

Architectural Description:

Cobbler's Shop: The small fieldstone building is sited on the farm side of the driveway, to the southwest of the kitchen and smokehouse, and slightly downhill. An approximate date of construction is not clear from an examination of the building itself. It is currently referred to as the cobbler's shop, but there is little indication of its past use; it is now empty except for an electrical box and a surveillance camera facing the driveway.

The building is very small, with a dirt floor, a small fireplace on the east short elevation, a window on the north long elevation, and a door on the south long elevation. The window has a very long sill and lintel. Three square dowels rotated 45 degrees run across it horizontally. The exterior of the window has been filled with stone, leaving it visible only on the interior. The fireplace has no hearth, but has a narrow, flat iron lintel bent into a crude arch shape. Further up the wall above the fireplace a wood beam spans most of the wall, and has various holes in it. This beam does not appear to serve a structural role.

The door frame is joined with mortise-and-tenon joints and has a brick threshold. The door itself consists of vertical boards with strap hinges. The main body of the door has a variety of hand-wrought nails; an opening in the upper part of the door has since been covered over on the outside. The covering has wire nails and visible circular saw marks. The horizontal plank of the door that occurs at the bottom of the opening is worn in a way that resembles the chew marks of a horse or other animal. The beams located where a ceiling would have been are hewn. The roof beams, however, appear much newer and the planks that the wood shingles are nailed to have obvious circular saw marks.

Kitchen: The kitchen is a story-and-a-half building with brick walls and a gable roof. It has two rooms downstairs and one upstairs. It measures 46'2" long and almost exactly 18' wide. It has one relatively large chimney standing at its center, dividing the two equally sized ground-level rooms. The half story loft sits above only the northeastern half of the kitchen. A wood

[1]Edward Lay, *Architecture of Jefferson County* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

stair, adjacent to the northeastern wall, leads to the loft.

The brick walls are about 18" thick. Each half of the kitchen is laid in a different brick bond. On the northeastern half is 5:1 American bond, whereas on the southwestern half, the walls are laid in Flemish bond. Visible behind a mature vine at about the middle of the building, on the northwestern side, are closer bricks - an indication that one half of the kitchen was a later addition.

The brick walls are painted white, inside and out. In some places the paint is very heavy, appearing to be composed of several layers. The chimney is painted white on its lower part where it is exposed to the first floor. The paint is so thick on the northeast side of the chimney that the brick bond is mostly obscured. Generally it is laid in a running bond of stretchers, although there are several odd courses made up of mostly headers.

The chimney's main fireplace (northeast) is quite big, almost 6' across and 4'7" from the floor to the top of its opening at the center. The soldier course over the opening is laid in a gentle arch. Supporting it is a slender iron lintel, 1" thick by 1 1/4" wide. The present floor of the hearth is raised and covered in slate. This appears to be a later addition. Under it, and extending beyond the hearth at the same level of the ground floor is a brick pad. These bricks are hand-molded and seem to come from the same period as the other bricks on the northeast side of the chimney (with the exception of the new bricks of the elevated hearth floor). Presumably, this was the fireplace's original floor, when it was regularly used for cooking.

To the right of the principle hearth, about 2' up from the floor, is a small bake oven. The bake oven's hearth sits below it at floor level. Within the bake oven and its hearth, the flues have been altered, largely filled in with later bricks and mortared in Portland cement. Upstairs is another fireplace that serves the loft. While smaller, it is arched and supported by an iron lintel like the big hearth downstairs. The presence of this fireplace indicates that the loft was originally used as living quarters by those working in the kitchen. With the exception of later additions and alterations, the bricks on this side of the chimney appear hand molded. They are rather irregular, even ragged, showing the variation one would expect from early American brick.

Tool marks on the surface of the framing members of the northeastern half reveal that they were cut by pit saw and broadax. The second floor joists rest in pockets left at the tops of the brick walls. The feet of the rafters rest

– at least in part – on the ends of the joists, although the entirety of the joint is hidden within the wall. The rafters are joined at their peak by a pegged mortise-and-tenon. The collar ties, or wind beams, are 3/4" thick planks simply nailed to the southern side of the rafters. At their ends they are cut roughly at angles to approximate the rafters' slope.

Along either side of the chimney are short "cripple" joists. These run at right angles to the principle joists, joined into them by a mortise-and-tenon in which the tenon runs entirely through the mortise and slightly beyond it.

In the southwestern end, the big fireplace is almost a mirror version of the one in the other half. The bricks here, however, look more regular and less worn and are less heavily coated in paint than the ones on the other side. They appear to have been made and laid at a later time.

This half of the kitchen has no loft. Its rafters, exposed to the ground floor, were not produced in the same manner as the rafters and joists in the northeast side but were hewn on all four sides. Typically, timbers produced before the twentieth century were not hewn on four sides. Because framing members were usually sawn from much bigger hewn timbers, these members were left with a mix of sawn and hewn faces. When smaller logs, close to the size of finished framing members, were used as they often were in backcountry construction the builder almost never bothered to hew these logs with four flat surfaces. It was unnecessary. They would simply hew one flat surface, sometimes two, enough to facilitate layout and joinery. Timbers hewn on four sides are not characteristic of framing practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are more typical of later, revival traditions in which the exposure of hand-work intensifies often assuming a decorative value.

The condition of the bricks of the chimney on the southwestern half and the finish of its rafters suggest that this half of the kitchen was added at a later time to the original northeastern half.

Smokehouse: The smokehouse building is a timber-framed structure sheathed with weatherboarding and has a wood-shingled roof. It consists of two separate rooms with no internal passage between the two, one of which is original and the other that is a later addition. The original portion of the building is denoted on the exterior by beaded weatherboarding and is significantly taller than the addition. Above the door on this side, two of the panels of bead board, the exact width of the door, may have been cut out and

replaced. On the interior, the original portion has charred members, indicating its use as the smokehouse. Mill-sawn joists run the short length of the building and also have metal hooks that were used to hang meats while they were being cured.

Clear signs that the taller side of the building is original are shown on the interior of the addition looking at the exposed framing members of the original side. When the addition was constructed, the weatherboarding was removed, leaving nail holes in the studs. Those same studs run the entire height of the original building rather than end at the height of the addition. In the original portion of the building, the very top of the studs can be seen joining the rafters. Directly above these studs, a small opening seemingly used for ventilation has been closed. Cut nails are used in the original corner bracing. Also pegs secure the corner braces to the sill. The original smokehouse was probably built at the same time as the rest of the outbuildings, such as the kitchen, during the mid nineteenth century.

The addition, in contrast to the original portion of the smokehouse, has simpler weatherboarding that does not have a bead. Inside the addition, the floor is about 18" lower than the floor of the original side, and also has been paved with concrete. Concrete has been filled under the original sill to allow for the topography difference. The interior of the addition has exposed, standardized timber framing members joined with wire nails, mostly of the same size but not placed at any regular interval. It appears that at one time the interior was whitewashed and a lower ceiling existed because there is a definite line lower than the joist line above which the whitewash does not continue.

Both the addition and the original portion of the smokehouse have the same type of paneled doors with wrought iron latches. Since the construction of the addition some artistic features have been added, such as a crest above the original smokehouse door, a weathervane, and a large stone slab mounted to the backside of the building.

Historian(s): J. Adams-Doolittle, Hunt Armstrong, Nikole Branch, Andrea Drake, Lindsay McCook, Kevin Riddle, Lucy Sherman, M. Shuman, May 2004.

Project Information: The documentation of three outbuildings on the grounds of Morven Farm took place as part of Louis Nelson's (2004) field methods class at the University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Department of

Architectural History. Students recorded various structures through measured drawings and written description; the record the students created was dependent on their ability to read what the structure was telling them about its construction history rather than on traditional documentary research.